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ABSTRACT

This 34-item annotated bibliography was compiled to help professional educators decide whether reading should be taught in kindergarten and, if so, how the instruction should be conducted. The references include varying and even opposing points of view. The authors of the articles are teachers, administrators, professors, and researchers. (TO)

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READING AND THE KINDERGARTEN

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An Annotated Bibliography

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Revised 1969

Ramon Ross, *General Editor*

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That some five-year-olds are ready to learn to read is unquestionable. What continues to be debated, however, is whether they should be taught in kindergarten and, if so, how the instruction ought to be carried on.

To help professional educators think about these two debatable questions, the following bibliography has been compiled. Deliberately, the listing includes references that have varying and even opposite points of view. The authors of the articles are teachers, administrators, professors, and researchers.

APPLETON, EDITH. "Beginning with Enthusiasm," *Education,* 86 (February 1966), 347-349.

This article describes a pre-first grade class in which interested children are given an opportunity to begin to read. With two teachers, the class is comprised of 44 children who, "for the greater part of the school day," choose their own activities.

AUSUBEL, D. P. "Viewpoints from Related Disciplines: Human Growth and Development," *Teachers College Record,* 60 (February 1959), 245-254.

One part of this article deals with the school's use of the readiness concept in the field of reading. The author, in a variety of ways, reminds his audience that "insufficient readiness may reflect inadequate prior learning on the part of the pupils because of inappropriate or insufficient instructional methods."

BACCI, WILLIAM. "Children Can Read in Kindergarten," *School Management,* 51 (May 1961), 120-122.

A brief account of a school system's attempts to introduce reading in the kindergarten year comprises this article. The teaching emphasis is on what the author calls "the phonic method of instruction." To carry out the plans, help was given both to the kindergarten teachers and to parents of the children.

BRZIENSKI, JOSEPH E., M. LUCILE HARRISON, and PAUL McKEE. "Should Johnny Read in Kindergarten?," *NEA Journal,* 56 (March 1967), 23-25.

Available studies of pre-first grade reading tend to deal with relatively small numbers of children. However, this article describes a large scale project in the Denver, Colorado schools in which reading instruction was carried on for twenty minutes each day during the kindergarten year. The authors of

this report, all directly connected with the project, have concluded that "beginning reading can be effectively taught to large numbers of typical kindergarten pupils . . . ." (In the February 1967 issue of *Educational Leadership,* an article by Darlene M. Mood criticizes the research design and some of the statistical procedures used in the Denver study.)

DURKIN, DOLORES. *Children Who Read Early.* New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1966.

A research report, this book tells of the findings from two longitudinal studies of children who learned to read at home, prior to entering school. Over as many as six school years, the early readers showed higher achievements in reading than equally bright classmates who did not get a head start. Especially emphasized in this report are possible implications of the home learning for beginning school instruction in reading.

DURKIN, DOLORES. "Informal Techniques for the Assessment of Prereading Behavior," in Thomas C. Barrett (Ed.), *The Evaluation of Children's Reading Achievement,* Perspectives in Reading No. 8. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1967.

The focus of this chapter is on readiness assessment. However, the discussion demonstrates that readiness testing, readiness instruction, and beginning reading instruction are not necessarily different.

DURKIN, DOLORES. "When Should Children Begin to Read," *Innovation and Change in Reading Instruction,* Chapter 2. The 67th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

This NSSE chapter traces the development of the reading readiness concept through the twentieth century, bringing its readers up-to-date by including a discussion of current interpretations. The chapter refers to available research that is pertinent to the question of when to begin reading instruction. It also describes one possible kind of kindergarten program in which five-year-olds would be given varied opportunities to begin to learn to read.

GATES, ARTHUR I. "The Necessary Mental Age for Beginning Reading," *Elementary School Journal,* 37 (March 1937), 497-508.

Time-wise, this is an old article. Its theme, though, is very much up-to-date. The author makes the important point that no single level of intelligence is required for beginning reading. Rather, he stresses that success with different kinds of reading programs requires different mental ages.

HEFFERNAN, HELEN. "Significance of Kindergarten Education," *Childhood Education,* 36 (March 1960), 313-319.

This 1960 article reemphasizes a theme made popular during the 1930's and 1940's: "We have a mountain of evidence to prove that a perfectly 'normal' child – IQ 100 – cannot learn to read until he is about six years, six months old."

HESS, ROBERT D., and ROBERTA M. BEAR (Eds.). *Early Education.* Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968.

The seventeen chapters comprising this book are papers which were presented at a Conference on Early Education sponsored by the Social Science Research Council. Only a few are directly concerned with the timing of reading instruction. However, all the chapters deal with aspects of learning and development that have relevance for beginning reading.

HILDRETH, GERTRUDE. "Early Writing as an Aid to Reading," *Elementary English,* 40 (January 1963), 15-20.

The reminder that young children, even preschool children, are interested in writing is offered by this author. The possible benefits of early writing for reading are also emphasized.

HILLMAN, ROSEMARY. "In Defense of the Five-Year-Old," *Saturday Review,* 46 (November 1963), 77 ff.

In this article the author makes a plea for kindergarten programs that are challenging for the "sophisticated, TV indoctrinated five-year-old of today." But the author, a kindergarten teacher, also warns against workbook oriented approaches.

HYMES, JAMES L. "More Pressure for Early Reading," *Childhood Education,* 40 (September 1963), 34-35.

That writers who promote the teaching of reading to two-year-olds are the best antidote to "pressures that have been mounting for earlier reading" is the theme of this article. The extreme position to which the author refers appeared in a *Ladies Home Journal* article in May 1963.

KEISLAR, EVAN, R., and JOHN D. McNEIL. "Oral and Non-oral Methods of Teaching Reading," *Educational Leadership,* 25 (May 1968), 761-764.

For this study, 92 kindergarten children were divided into what are called oral and non-oral groups. Both were given the chance to learn to read twenty words during a two week period with the use of programed

instruction presented on tapes. The one difference was that the oral group said the words aloud while the non-oral group did not. The researchers note that post-test results showed that "children in the oral group achieved more success in beginning reading than children who were not given the opportunity to vocalize while learning to read." With this report, a question must be raised about the value of findings which are based on two weeks of instruction and which say nothing about the permanence of the learning.

KELLEY, MARJORIE L., and MARTIN K. CHEN. "An Experimental Study of Formal Reading Instruction at the Kindergarten Level," *Journal of Educational Research,* 60 (January 1967), 224-229.

This is a report about two groups of kindergartners one of which received "formal reading instruction" – no further description is given – while the other had "customary kindergarten readiness instruction." As would be expected, end-of-the-year testing showed the reading achievement of the former group to be significantly higher. The researchers also administered a variety of attitude-toward-school tests to both groups. In this instance results showed varying and even conflicting findings, some of which were not of statistical significance. One possible explanation for such findings is the questionable validity of the instruments.

KELLEY, M. L. "When Are Children Ready to Read?" *Saturday Review,* 46 (July 20, 1963), 58 ff.

Many five-year-olds enter kindergarten with a "built-in readiness" for reading. Such is the thesis of this article. The author, a curriculum coordinator, maintains that "kindergarten no longer needs to serve as a major socializing agency" and that greater provision must be made for the intellectual differences among five-year-old children.

McCRACKEN, GLENN. *The Right to Learn.* Chicago: Henry Rognery, 1959.

The author of this book accuses the schools of using "lack of readiness" as an excuse for the disappointing achievement resulting from status quo kinds of instruction in beginning reading. McCracken stresses the importance of achievement of quality instruction rather than factors like the mental age or the "readiness" of the child.

MAYNE, LUCILLE. "An Individual Study of the Reading Acceleration of Two Kindergarten Children," *Elementary English,* 40 (April 1963), 406-408.

A kindergarten teacher reports what she did to advance the reading ability of two bright kindergartners discovered to be already reading. She describes their progress by the end of the year, at which time the two children were promoted into second grade. Their reading achievement at the end of grade two is also described. All of the data show achievement that is above grade level expectations.

MEADE, MARGARET. "Questions That Need Asking," *Teachers College Record,* 53 (November 1961), 89-93.

This well-known anthropologist raises interesting questions about our society and a few of the questions are concerned with reading. Specifically she asks, "Why shouldn't mothers, who spend all day with their children, teach them to read . . . ?"

NATCHEZ, GLADYS. "From Talking to Reading Without Really Trying," *Reading Teacher,* 22 (January 1967), 339-342.

Why is it that children who learn to talk have problems learning to read? Adult expectations and responses are what make the difference, according to this author. She points out that when a child is learning to talk he is allowed to progress at his own rate and in his own way. Every effort wins enthusiastic responses; even errors are thought to be "cute." When it comes to reading, though, "everything changes." The implication seems to be that those who teach reading should learn from the earlier and more successful environment.

PINES, MAYA. "How Three-Year-Olds Teach Themselves to Read – and Love It," *Harpers,* 226 (May 1963), 58-64.

The author is a free-lance writer. In this article she tells about the experiments of O. K. Moore in which he uses computerized typewriters to help young children learn to read, write, and spell.

RAMBUSCH, N. M. *Learning How to Learn.* Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962.

Montessori education is often associated with early reading instruction. This book, a description of "an American approach to Montessori," should interest educators who are concerned about young children and their experiences.

RASMUSSEN, MARGARET (Ed.). *Reading in the Kindergarten?* Washington, D. C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1962.

This ACEI booklet is comprised of seven articles, some of which were published earlier. The introduction explains that the booklet was compiled for "all those seeking help on questions raised about teaching reading in the kindergarten . . . ."

SHAPIRO, BERNARD J., and ROBERT E. WILLFORD. "i.t.a. – Kindergarten or First Grade?" *Reading Teacher,* 22 (January 1969), 307-311.

The authors begin by noting that a study by another researcher showed that starting kindergarten children to read using i.t.a. did not lead to significantly higher achievement in reading or spelling than when i.t.a. was used initially with first graders. This conclusion was based on data collected at the end of grade one. In their own study, they make a similar comparison but follow subjects through second grade. At that time, but also at earlier testing periods, the kindergarten-taught group was ahead in both reading and spelling. Their lead was not one year of achievement; however, their mean scores were significantly higher. Because of the brevity of journal reports, a reader of this one cannot know why the results of the two studies are different. For example, to what degree the first grade teachers in both took advantage of the kindergarten achievement would be a very relevant variable to consider.

SHELDON, WILLIAM. "Teaching the Very Young to Read," *Reading Teacher,* 16 (December 1962), 163-169.

The author describes current interest in the topic of young children and reading, and also some of the research focusing on this topic. From the studies the author has selected, the conclusion proposed is "there seems to be little or no justification for introducing reading into the curriculum at the kindergarten or five-year-old stage."

SHELDON, WILLIAM. "Should the Very Young Be Taught to Read?" *NEA Journal,* 52 (November 1963), 20-22.

"Harm might result" is the thesis of this article. That "premature instruction" might lead to problems with vision, distaste for reading, and even retardation in reading are especially emphasized.

SIMMONS, V. C. "Why Waste Our Five-Year-Olds?" *Harper's,* 223 (April 1960), 71-73.

Written by a kindergarten teacher, this article develops the thesis that "primary education . . . is a holding-back procedure." The author emphasizes the new precociousness found among current five-year-olds. She also suggests

that preparation of nursery school and kindergarten teachers has included too much emphasis on *how* to teach and too little on *what* to teach.

SMITH, NILA BANTON. "Early Reading: Viewpoints," *Childhood Education,* 42 (December 1965), 229-241.

In general, the thesis of this article is one of opposition to teaching reading during the kindergarten year. However, the author does single out pre-first grade children who are interested in learning to read or who might have already begun. For these children, the author believes, school help with reading ought to be made available.

SUTTON, MARJORIE H. "Children Who Learned to Read in Kindergarten: A Longitudinal Study," *Reading Teacher,* 22 (April 1969), 595-602.

During 1962-1963, over 100 kindergartners were given a varietv of opportunities to read. At the end of the year, 46 scored at a grade level of 1.3 or higher on the Gates Primary Reading Achievement Test. These children thus became an early reading group for this study. The report specified above describes their progress in reading until the end of grade three and compares it with that of other third graders. Test results showed them to be ahead. However, the early readers were somewhat brighter than the others and the statistics employed by the researcher did not control for this. Nor does she indicate whether the differences in mean achievement were statistically significant.

TINKER, M. A., and C. M. McCULLOUGH. "Recommended Practices in Kindergarten," *Teaching Elementary Reading.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968, 418-438.

This chapter offers suggestions for ascertaining a young child's readiness for reading. Its most helpful content, however, is the suggestions given for readiness activities that are directly related to reading.

VAN WIE, E. K., and D. M. LAMMERS. "Are We Being Fair to Our Kindergartners?" *Elementary School Journal,* 52 (April 1962), 348-351.

Written by two elementary school principals, this article maintains that most kindergarten teachers are trying to fit children into a school pattern that was developed decades ago. The authors also suggest that much less attention is given to differences found among five-year-olds than is given to children in grades 1-6. A brief description of a kindergarten in which these differences are recognized is then presented.

WEISMAN, DOROTHY. "Is Play Obsolete?" *Saturday Review,* 46 (November 16, 1963), 77 ff.

This author, director of a nursery school, is opposed to the "hurrier," to the one who "either out of forgetfulness or of dislike of his own childhood . . . tries to rob today's children of theirs." The author develops her article by considering the questions: What do we want children to learn? What do we know about learning? In what ways do children learn best?

WITTY, PAUL A. "Studies of Early Learning – Their Nature and Significance," *Education,* 89 (September-October 1968), 4-10.

"Early Learning – A New Frontier" is the theme of this issue of *Education.* The article noted above is the first of several which deal with the theme. It describes a variety of studies pertinent to young children, some of which deal directly with early reading. Witty's conclusion is that reading instruction should no longer be "outlawed" for kindergarten children.

ZARUBA, ELIZABETH A. "A Survey of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Reading Experiences in Kindergarten," *Journal of Educational Research,* 60 (February 1967), 252-255.

Although reported in 1967, the teacher responses described in the above article were obtained in March 1964. Consequently they might bear little relationship to what would be given now. Whatever their value might be for the present, responses obtained from 12 kindergarten and 39 primary teachers led the author to conclude that "most teachers were interested in and valued reading instruction in kindergarten, but that primary teachers would tend to approach such instruction more formally than kindergarten teachers."

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